

Guest commentary

Flawed South Mountain Freeway promises heavier pollution

By Jeff Ludwig

There has been lots of talk and letters recently for and against the Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway.

I have been one of the many people who are against it. I'm guilty of this because of two reasons, one I live in Ahwatukee and two the future does not look good for fossil fuels.

With an open mind I have listened to both sides. I have done this in two ways. First by going door to door through the Foothills with a petition against the existing alignment of it and second by reading every article written about it. One thing that I've noticed is that the majority of the people I have met personally who are for it, are easily swayed to sign the petition after a brief explanation of what it will do to our environment. I call this the prevailing wind defense.

Once again, because our prevailing wind comes from the southwest and the Foothills are to the north, the pollution will have no place to go. It will hang in here and begin to poison this beautiful community. If you live in Ahwatukee, you should know that we have less smog than any other community in Phoenix, for this we can thank our prevailing winds.

Now let's get down to facts, will the Loop 202 help relieve congestion into downtown Phoenix?

The answer is yes.

The reason it will, is because most truck traffic, not going downtown or to points north, will take this bypass. But this 20-year-old plan has a flaw, it's called the West Valley. This once rural land has now been heavily populated and it is plain to see no matter where this bypass ends up connecting to Interstate 10, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) will have created another

Broadway curve.

When I think of ADOT, I think of it as a godlike creature that has run amuck, with blinders on its eyes and a mind closed to any logical solutions. Our city has changed and so have our needs.

I have stated in another article on how to resolve this truck bypass problem, and I'm going to say it one more time for anybody who missed it. Using Interstate 8, we could build a freeway that would leave I-8 about 30 miles east of Gila Bend, running diagonally in a north west direction just west of Mobile then pick up state Route 85 about 15 miles south of Buckeye. This would also mean improving state Route 85 to I-10.

Next we have the problem of the multimillion dollar interchange that ADOT has already built, oh and by the way that is why they are pushing so hard on this alignment.

So that the money is not wasted, negotiate with the Gila River Indian Community, the extension of Pecos as a parkway with a bend to the north of St. Johns before entering 51st Avenue. The bend would bypass their school and housing that now sits on the existing Pecos Road to the west. The parkway would have a truck weight restriction, which would cut down on the pollution of the Foothills community.

Next 51st Avenue would have to be improved to two lanes in each direction to Dobbins Road. Fifty-first Avenue past Dobbins is already being improved to two lanes in each direction with development. This would also benefit the Gila Community giving them access from the west to their casinos, resort, Rawhide, etc. The Gila Community would like ADOT to improve I-10 for its benefit, so maybe the existence of a Pecos

Parkway is a negotiating possibility.

The truth of the matter is that by the time this loop is completed our population will have doubled, which makes it outdated before we start.

New freeways and loops are not the answer, light rail, or mass transit is. With the rising cost of fuels and our growing population we need to move people more effectively. How much more bad air do we have to inhale. This is the 21st century, ADOT along with our elected governing officials must bring Phoenix into it.

There are hundreds of miles of train track that lay in this county and go unused. Why? Because we're idiots. Because of poor government we have given ADOT a free hand to foolishly spend our money. That's right folks this is another example of poor government spending.

In finishing I would like to say to our elected officials, think outside the box, be bold, be brave and put a leash on ADOT.

A 14-year resident of Ahwatukee Foothills, Jeff Ludwig is a private business owner who grew up across from a freeway in California.